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Coronado in Yokosuka



JIM SCHULZ/Stars and Stripes

A sailor on the USS Coronado raises the flag upon mooring pier side at Yokosuka Naval Base on Wednesday. The ship will serve as the Seventh Fleet flagship while the USS Blue Ridge undergoes maintenance in drydock.

Convoy attacked in Iraq; 3 civilians dead

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Insurgents attacked a U.S. military patrol west of Baghdad early Wednesday and an ensuing fight left three civilians dead and two U.S. soldiers injured, the U.S. military and Iraqi hospital officials said.

The fighting came a day after assailants shot at a van carrying police recruits south of Baghdad, killing nine, while gunmen killed two policemen in the north. On Wednesday, the police chief of a nearby district was shot and killed. The slayings are the latest to target police and other Iraqis who work with the U.S.-led occupation.

Associated Press Television News footage of the aftermath of the fighting in the town of Fallujah, 32 miles west of Baghdad, showed two civilian cars burned, bloodstains on the ground and bullet holes in walls, as well as two wounded Iraqis being taken into a hospital.

"American troops came under attack while they were patrolling in the main street," Fallujah resident Ahmed Ali said.

The U.S. military said two "coalition personnel" were injured.

They were flown from Fallujah to a combat hospital after attackers detonated a roadside bomb and raked their vehicle with gunfire, a U.S. official said.

Three civilians died and three others were wounded, said Muthana al-Jumeili, a doctor at Fallujah General Hospital. Fallujah is a hotbed of insurgent activity.

On the eastern outskirts of Baghdad, three civilians — a 3-year-old boy, his grandmother and a male relative — were killed when an explosion destroyed the car they were riding in, according to relatives. Six other people were injured in the blast, which relatives said was caused by a mine.

Gay dismissals drop to lowest level in 9 years

BY NANCY ZUCKERBROD

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of gays dismissed from the military under the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy has dropped to its lowest level in nine years as U.S. forces fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a report by an advocacy group.

The military discharged 787 gays and lesbians last year, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, which attributed the decline to the importance of U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The figure marks a 17 percent decrease from 2002 and a 39 percent drop from 2001, just before the conflicts began in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"You have to ask yourself, and you have to ask the Pentagon, why are the discharges going down?" said C. Dixon Osburn, executive director of the advocacy group and one of the report's authors. "When they need people, they keep them. When they don't, they implement their policy of discrimination with greater force."

A Pentagon spokeswoman said Tuesday that Defense Department officials could not comment on the report because they had not yet seen it.

The military's policy on gays, known as "don't ask, don't tell," has been in place since 1994. It allows gays to serve in uniform so long as they don't reveal their sexual orientation.

The military has discharged nearly 10,000 people for violations of the policy since it first took effect, according to the report.

The number of gays discharged increased steadily from 1994 to 1998. Dismissals decreased slightly in 1999 but then increased again until peaking at 1,273 discharges in 2001.

The services currently have different troop requirements.

The Army, the largest of the services, is so stretched by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and missions elsewhere that it is using its stop-loss authority to prevent soldiers from retiring or otherwise leaving when their service obligation ends.

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Rumsfeld tells Congress base closures necessary

BY ROBERT BURNS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld certified to Congress on Tuesday that a new round of military base closures is needed in 2005 and could yield billions of dollars in savings by 2011.

Rumsfeld also for the first time provided Congress with statistical evidence to support his estimate that the military has about 24 percent more base capacity than it needs to support the armed forces.

His certification is contained in a report submitted to Congress on Tuesday and required by the 2003 law that authorized a new round of base closings and realignments in 2005 — the first since 1995.

The report contains a memorandum from Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, saying the chiefs of the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps agree that more bases must be closed and realigned if the Pentagon is to meet the threats to America's national security.

The report says the Army has the greatest amount of excess base capacity — 29 percent. The Air Force has 24 percent more than it needs and the Navy and Marine Corps combined have 21 percent excess. These figures are based on a Pentagon forecast of the

military's "force structure" — the number of Army divisions, Navy ships, Air Force strike aircraft wings, and so on — in 2009.

Rumsfeld's report said that if the coming round of base closures results in reducing 20 percent of capacity, then the Pentagon would see a net savings for 2011 of about \$5 billion, with a recurring savings of about \$8 billion a year after that.

The Pentagon has not said how many bases it hopes to close or realign. Rumsfeld is required to submit his list of recommended closures and realignments to an independent commission by May 16, 2005. The commission members are to be appointed early next year by the president and Congress.

Although the estimate of 24 percent excess capacity might seem to suggest approximately a one-fourth reduction in the number of bases, the actual result may be much different. That is because the Pentagon is expected to expand some of its facilities, such as training ranges, and consolidate others, in addition to closing some.

Rumsfeld's report to Congress says the excess capacity may actually be greater than 24 percent because the Pentagon expects to gain efficiencies by co-locating the forces of different services in some cases.

In the most recent rounds of base closings, there were 27 major base closings in 1995, 28 in 1993, 26 in 1991 and 16 in 1988.

Dismissals

Continued from Page 1

The Air Force, on the other hand, is trying to reduce its ranks through attrition, and the Navy also is shedding personnel.

All the services except the Air Force dismissed fewer gays last year than

the year before. The Air Force dismissed 142 people for violating "don't ask, don't tell," up from 121 in 2002.

Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Stephens said the service was "unaware of specific factors that would account for the slight increase for this past year."

Marines in Iraq try out controversial new hailer

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

Troops in Iraq have a high-powered bullhorn, of sorts, aimed at getting their message across — either through amplified voice commands or an ear-piercing noise that could deafen those close by.

The Long Range Acoustic Device, or LRAD, is a hailing and warning device that can be used to command a speeding vehicle in the distance to stop, but also has the ability to unleash a deafening, high-pitched noise to disperse angry crowds.

San Diego-based American Technology Corporation received a \$1.1 million contract to equip the California-based 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Camp Lejeune, N.C., with the LRAD system.

The device was developed in response to the deadly 2000 attack on the destroyer USS Cole as it refueled at a Yemeni port, said Capt. David Nevers, spokesman for the 24th MEU.

"We were interested in a tool that could help us at a safe, standoff distance, and hail approaching individuals or groups, get their attention and give commands and instruction to

them in a safe manner," Nevers said. "The LRAD, we found, is going to fit that bill nicely. Our primary concerns are force protection and to avoid a lethal encounter wherever possible. It's a hailing device designed to get people's attention at a safe, stand-off distance."

The 45-pound "narrowcasting" dish on a stand comes equipped with an MP3 player that can boom prerecorded voice messages or let an operator speak extemporaneously.

While military officials said its intended use is to deliver messages from a safe distance for troops, the capability to deliver a high-pitched noise makes the system a nonlethal weapon, and an unapproved one at that, according to one critic.

"What I think is harmful is that we are using it in Iraq and on the Iraqi civilian population as guinea pigs for a weapons system that has not been fully aired and tested," said William Arkin, a military analyst and frequent critic of the Pentagon.

It can deliver at a close range a sound measuring 145 decibels, louder than rock concerts or jet airplanes.

"That's past the threshold for pain," which is about 125 decibels, said Charles Lindsay, an audiologist in Exton, Pa.

"Anyone close to that would find it

Navy to bring new missile tracking system to Pacific

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy will deploy in September a guided missile destroyer to the Sea of Japan equipped with newest missile defense tracking technology.

"As part of the President's directive to accelerate the fielding of a [ballistic missile defense] Initial Defensive Operations capability... the Navy will deploy in the Sea of Japan, beginning this September, and on a virtually continuous basis thereafter, a guided missile destroyer to serve as a Long-Range Surveillance and Tracking platform," Navy Secretary Gordon England said Monday at the Missile Defense Conference in Washington.

The yet-to-be-identified destroyer will be a Pacific Fleet asset, but Navy officials aren't talking about where it will be based, or what Navy assets and personnel will be tasked to support it during the deployment.

"Having a destroyer there is no different than having a destroyer anywhere else on deployment. We always provide the support and service needed," said Navy spokeswoman Lt. Amy Gilliland.

By "virtually continuous presence," the Navy is saying the de-

stroyer will have a recurring presence in the region, Gilliland said. "We're not promising a constant presence, but we're making a commitment," she said. "It won't be tethered to one spot in the ocean."

The Navy's current plan is to equip some of its oldest "Flight I" destroyers with the tracking and surveillance capability, Gilliland said.

The effort is one part of the larger Pentagon five-year, \$53 billion Missile Defense Agency program aimed at developing a system that could counter ballistic threats against the United States and allies.

By the end of 2005, the MDA is slated to have up to 10 SM-3 systems ready, and by spring 2006, it should have 15 Navy destroyers equipped with the long-range tracking capability and three Navy cruisers equipped with the engagement capability, said Chris Taylor, spokesman for the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency.

SM-3 is designed to intercept and destroy short- and medium-range ballistic missiles in space, according to the manufacturer, Raytheon.

"We're turning the capability over to [the Navy and Strategic Command], and they decide where it goes," Taylor said.

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extremely painful and deafening. If you were right in front, it would probably knock you over and could cause permanent deafness instantaneously."

"Oh my. I hope to God that person is using ear protection," said Gretchen Syfert, an audiologist at the Arlington and Alexandria Hearing Centers in Virginia. "If I were talking to a patient, I would tell them it's instantaneous that that could cause damage."

According to ATC's Web site, at 300 yards, LRAD's highest sustained source level, the warning tone is 105 decibels, and the "oscillating and piercing LRAD warning tone is designed to be very annoying [similar to the effect of a very loud smoke detector]."

At a close range of 1 meter, the tone is 146 decibels. Smoke detectors register between 80 and 90 decibels. Rock concerts register between 110 and 120, and a jet engine at 140.

Hearing protection is required for operators of the LRAD, and 24th MEU Marines still are determining what level of protection to provide, Nevers said. At a minimum, those behind the dish wear earplugs, he said, and those in front most likely will wear double protection such as earplugs and headphones.

The LRAD is not classified as a nonlethal weapon because it's not intended to be used as one, said Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Rivers Johnson.

"Its intended purpose was only to communicate at a distant with crowd by way of megaphone," Johnson said. He did not know if the department's nonlethal directorate precludes troops from using the piercing warning tone option.

"Could it be considered to be a nonlethal weapon? Yes. I wouldn't deny the obvious," Johnson said. "But that's not its intended purpose."

In order for a system to be classified as a nonlethal weapon, it must undergo "very extensive legal review and the human-effects review," Corps spokesman Capt. Dan McSweeney said. The LRAD has not been put through any such reviews.

The system is safe when used properly, both to those in the beam and the operator, Carl Gruenler, ATC's vice president of military and government operations, wrote in a March 16 rebuttal to an Arkin's opinion piece in the March 7 editions of the Los Angeles Times.

"It's not a weapon because it's not designed to kill or injure, and it's not a nonlethal because it doesn't fit the definition," Gruenler said. "While it might meet characteristics for a nonlethal capability, that's not what it was intended to do."

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Host loses job

NEW YORK — National Public Radio has bounced Bob Edwards, host of "Morning Edition" since its inception in 1979, out of his job.

The radio network announced Tuesday that Edwards, 56, will become senior correspondent of NPR News, with his reports being heard on various broadcasts, at the end of April.

Pumped up

WASHINGTON — The retail price of gasoline hit an all-time high Tuesday — nearly \$1.74 per gallon nationwide — reflecting strong demand, tight supplies and the high cost of oil, AAA reported.

AAA, formerly the American Automobile Association, reported premium unleaded costs more than \$2 a gallon in many parts of the country.

Alcohol and hearts

CHICAGO — Drinking in moderation appears to reduce heart-related deaths in men with high blood pressure, new research suggests, challenging the belief among many doctors that alcohol should be off-limits to such patients.

In the study, men with high blood pressure who reported having about one or two drinks a day were 44 percent less likely to die of cardiovascular causes such as heart attacks than men with hypertension who rarely or never drank.

The doctor is out

LOS ANGELES — Hugs, champagne toasts and snippets of poetry marked the filming of the last episode of NBC's "Frasier" after a remarkable 11-year run.

The series, which started as a spinoff of "Cheers," will end with an hourlong finale airing May 13.

From The Associated Press

Former adviser says Bush not focused on terrorism pre-9/11

BY HOPE YEN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government's former top counterterrorism adviser testified Wednesday that the Clinton administration had "no higher priority" than combatting terrorists while the Bush administration made it "an important issue but not an urgent issue."

Richard Clarke told a bipartisan commission investigating the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that "although I continued to say it [terrorism] was an urgent problem, I don't think it was ever treated that way" by the current administration in advance of the strikes two and a half years ago.

Clarke slid into the witness chair for widely anticipated testimony days after publishing a book that criticized President Bush for his response to the threat of terrorism. The White House has sharply criticized the book and mounted a counteroffensive against its author.

The white-haired former government official spoke after the commission released a written report saying that confusion about the scope of the CIA's authority to kill Osama bin Laden had hampered efforts to eliminate the man who heads al-Qaida. The result was a continued reliance on local forces in Af-

ghanistan that had scant chance of success, the commission said.

"The commission needs to ask why that strategy remained largely unchanged throughout the period leading up to 9/11," it said.

The commission's report said that officials from Clinton's National Security Council had told investigators the CIA had sufficient authority to assassinate bin Laden.

But it also said that agency officials, including Director George Tenet "told us they heard a different message. ... They believed the only acceptable context for killing bin Laden was a credible capture operation."

Justices hear arguments on pledge

BY GINA HOLLAND

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A California atheist told the Supreme Court on Wednesday that the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance are unconstitutional and offensive to people who don't believe there is a God.

Michael Newdow, who challenged the Pledge of Allegiance on behalf of his daughter, said the court has no

choice but to keep it out of public schools.

"It's indoctrinating children," he said. "The government is supposed to stay out of religion."

But some justices said they were not sure if the words were intended to unite the country, or express religion.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist noted that Congress unanimously added the words "under God" in the pledge in 1954.

"That doesn't sound divisive," he said.

"That's only because no atheists can be elected to office," Newdow responded.

The subject of Newdow's right to bring the lawsuit had dominated the beginning of arguments in the landmark case to decide if the classroom salute in public schools violates the Constitution's ban on government-established religion.

U.S. drivers buying fewer convertibles

The Associated Press

DETROIT — Fewer Americans chose to drive with the sun on their faces and the wind in their hair the past couple of years, as an uncertain economy and other sporty alternatives curtailed convertible purchases, a leading provider of auto statistics said Monday.

Total U.S. convertible registrations were 296,433 in 2003, down 2.3 percent from the previous year, according to Southfield-based R.L. Polk & Co.

Convertible sales grew in the late 1990s and peaked at more than 310,000 in 2001 before

falling the past two years. The figures include registrations for retail and fleet purchases.

"Convertibles are a more discretionary purchase than most vehicles and are sensitive to changes in consumer confidence and buying attitudes," said Lonnie Miller, director of Polk's analytical solutions arm.

"The production of new specialty vehicles is also providing consumers with more shopping choices."

Those new offerings include crossover vehicles, which typically are marketed as sport utility vehicles but have characteristics of a car, minivan and SUV.

EU hits Microsoft with record \$613M fine

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The European Union declared Microsoft Corp. guilty of abusing its “near monopoly” with Windows to foil competitors in other markets and hit the software giant with a record \$613 million fine Wednesday.

The EU’s antitrust authority said that “because the illegal behavior is still ongoing,” it was also demanding changes

in the way Microsoft operates in Europe, with the aim of improving competition globally. The sanctions go well beyond the 2001 U.S. antitrust settlement, but Microsoft promises to appeal.

The regulators gave Microsoft 90 days to offer European computer manufacturers a version of Windows without the company’s digital media player, which lets computer users watch video and

listen to music and is expected to gain importance as multimedia content becomes more pervasive.

The European Commission also chastised Microsoft for trying to “shut competitors out of the market” in software for office servers, by hoarding code that would help competing programs work smoothly with Windows computers. Microsoft now has 120 days to provide rivals in

the server market with such code.

EU Competition Commissioner Mario Monti said the ruling was “proportionate,” noting that “dominant companies have a special responsibility to ensure that the way they do business doesn’t prevent competition.”

Microsoft, which had \$32 billion in revenue last year, did about 20 percent of its business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Explosive on tracks

PARIS — A French train employee on Wednesday found an explosive device buried in the bed of a railway line heading from France to Switzerland, the Interior Ministry said.

Bomb disposal experts neutralized the device, which was half-buried under a track in the village of Montieramey, on a train line heading from Paris to Basel, Switzerland, the ministry said.

From The Associated Press

Hamas says it's not targeting U.S.

BY LARA SUKHTIAN

The Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — The new Hamas leader in Gaza said Wednesday the militant group had no plans to attack U.S. targets, while another top official in the organization said it has targeted Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for death.

The Islamic group had made veiled threats it would retaliate against the United States for Israel’s assassination of Hamas spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin on Monday, but it has rarely attacked American targets during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fearing retaliation, Israel has gone on high alert since Yassin’s death, and troops south of the West Bank city of Nablus stopped a 16-year-old Palestinian boy wearing a suicide bomb vest from crossing through a checkpoint. Soldiers forced the boy, Hussam Abdo, to remove the explosives-packed vest and strip to his underwear.

The army said its experts later detonated the bomb.

Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a hard-liner named Tuesday as Hamas’ new Gaza chief, said the group’s militant activities were aimed solely at Israel, which it has pledged to destroy and replace with an Islamic state.

News tracker: What's new with old news

States

Jackpot winner robbery: Three men were charged Tuesday with stealing \$100,000 from the winner of the biggest undivided lottery jackpot in U.S. history.

The men were accused of breaking into Jack Whittaker’s sport utility vehicle Jan. 17. The vehicle was parked outside Whittaker’s home.

Authorities began investigating after learning the suspects spent \$7,000 to \$8,000 on clothing in a department store.

Brian C. Hillabold and David M. Fewell, both 20, were jailed. Vernon R. Jackson Jr., 22, was arraigned later.

Internet scam shut down: Federal officials have shut down an identity theft scam in which a man tricked Internet users into providing their credit card and bank account numbers.

Zachary Keith Hill, 19, of Houston, pleaded guilty last month to having and using credit instruments that did not belong to him. He is set to be sentenced May 17 and faces up to 15 years in prison, federal prosecutors said.

The government says Hill got hundreds of people to provide information by sending e-mails that appeared to come from America Online or PayPal. The e-mails requested updated personal information and said the account would be suspended if the information wasn’t provided.

Nichols trial: A man calling himself Mike Havens bought 2,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer a little more than six months before the Oklahoma City bombing.

Another man, going by Daryl Bridges, bought prepaid phone cards that prosecutors said were used to contact Timothy McVeigh.

Prosecutors said Tuesday that both Havens and Bridges were actually Terry Nichols, accused of using fake identities in his attempt to help McVeigh cause the deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history.

Fresno slayings: The man accused of killing nine of his children at his Fresno home has been barred from receiving visitors in prison because police think he could order family members to kill themselves, according to a published report.

Officials received a tip that Marcus Wesson “may try to orchestrate a family suicide” or order attacks on family members who oppose him, Wes Merritt, a chief deputy in the Fresno County Counsel’s Office, said. **Music file swapping suits:** The recording industry has sued 532 people, including many using computer networks at 21 universities, claiming they illegally shared digital music files over the Internet.

The latest wave of copyright lawsuits brought by the Recording Industry Association of America marks the first time the trade group has targeted computer users swapping music files over university networks.

World

Dasani water in Europe: The Coca-Cola Co. announced Wednesday that it would postpone the introduc-

tion of its Dasani bottled water in France and Germany.

The move came the company withdrew the product from sale in Britain last week after finding that samples contained higher than permitted levels of the chemical bromate. The drink also was criticized here for being advertised as “pure” when it is processed tap water produced at a factory in southeast London.

WWII bomb: More than 2,000 thousand residents of a northern French town were evacuated from their homes Wednesday while experts tried to defuse an unexploded World War II bomb.

The 275-pound U.S. bomb was discovered last week at a construction site in Caudry, a town of about 14,000 people. Experts were unable to neutralize the bomb, so they transferred it to an isolated field and exploded it.

Neo-Nazi raid in Germany: Police raided more than 300 properties across Germany Wednesday in an operation targeting Internet distribution of banned far-right music, seizing thousands of compact discs and hundreds of computers.

Germany’s Federal Criminal Office said it was seeking evidence in an investigation of 342 people across the country who offered racist or neo-Nazi music for downloading from their computers.

Disarming Haiti: Haiti’s interim government held its first Cabinet meeting Wednesday, discussing security concerns and plans for disarming militants as it seeks to keep order with the help of international peacekeepers.

As ministers began talks at the National Palace, a top aide to Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said working with U.S. and French troops to disarm militants of all political stripes is a priority.

“Everybody has to be disarmed. Without disarmament, there will be no security,” the aide, Miguel Auguste, said.

Auguste didn’t go into specifics but said officials were considering new training and education programs.

N. Korea meets with China: Reclusive North Korean leader Kim Jong Il held a rare meeting Wednesday with China’s foreign minister as the communist allies discussed the region’s nuclear dispute.

Beijing said the session was a “very important contact.”

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who arrived Tuesday, is the first foreign minister from Beijing to visit the North in five years.

The visit is seen as bolstering the push for a third round of six-nation talks on the North’s nuclear programs.

Pope’s publications: Italian publishing giant Mondadori announced Wednesday it is negotiating worldwide rights for Pope John Paul II’s new book, a recollection of his years as bishop in Poland that will come out in Italy on his 84th birthday May 18.

The book is coming out 10 years after publication of John Paul’s heavily autobiographical “Crossing the Threshold of Hope,” which Mondadori said sold 20 million copies around the world.

From The Associated Press

Miami QB job open for competition

The Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Bernie Kosar walked onto Miami's practice field Tuesday wearing flip-flops and sunglasses.

"I can still throw the out," he told coach Larry Coker.

The coach turned to a small gallery nearby and jokingly said: "Just what we need — another quarterback controversy."

Even without Kosar, who led the Hurricanes to their first national title in 1983, another one could be on the way. Brock Berlin opened spring practice Tuesday as the starter, but Coker made it clear he wants Derrick Crudup and freshman Kyle Wright to push for the job.

"I don't care who plays, I really don't," Coker said. "We don't owe Brock anything, or Derrick or Kyle Wright. We've got to play the best players, guys that can win games for us."

Berlin, who transferred to Miami after spending two years backing up Rex Grossman at Florida, was inconsistent in his first season. He threw just 12 touchdown passes, leading the offense to its second-lowest scoring average in two decades.

Berlin was benched for one game after losing to Virginia Tech and Tennessee. He regained his starting job and played well in wins against Rutgers and Pittsburgh, but has shown little improvement in reading defenses — something Dorsey did so well.

Crudup, a fellow senior, began spring practice as the backup. In his one start last year, he completed five of 13 passes for 80 yards and a touchdown. He also threw an interception and fumbled once — the same mistakes that put Berlin on the bench.

Many think that Wright, widely considered the top prep quarterback in the nation in 2002, is more talented than Berlin or Crudup. He has a stronger arm than either of them and is more mobile than Berlin.

Filling the open lane

Kansas looking at a clear path to the Final Four, if it can avoid mistakes made by other high seeds

BY STEVE BRISENDINE

The Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — First, Illinois-Chicago. Then, Pacific.

Next up, Alabama-Birmingham.

Lucky Kansas might just make it all the way to the Final Four without playing a team seeded higher than ninth — unless, of course, the Jayhawks become an upset victim themselves.

Go ahead and ask fourth-seeded Kansas or any other team that plays a lower-regarded squad if it feels like a favorite heading into the round of 16 at the NCAA tournament.

"I say 'Boo' to anyone who says that," Kansas guard J.R. Giddens said Tuesday.

The Jayhawks — who already beat a No. 13 and a No. 12 — are trying to make it to a third straight Final Four. If Kansas beats No. 9 UAB in the St. Louis Regional on Friday, it will face No. 3 Georgia Tech or No. 10 Nevada.

"We're going to come out like we're the underdogs," Georgia Tech center Luke Schenscher said. "We can't be complacent in any way if we're going to compete with teams like Nevada."

Someone had to knock off the higher seeds across the tournament, and now that someone — be it UAB or Alabama or Nevada — is planning to do the same thing to another favored team.

"The 16 teams left are the top 16

teams in the country," Kansas guard Keith Langford said. "The people who won are the people who are supposed to be here. I can hardly see how somebody would see this as an easy road for us, considering we've endured a season where we've had eight losses already."

This time of year, though, one loss is all it takes. So far, NCAA upsets have wiped out seven teams seeded 1-4.

"We know what a kid who's 22 or 23 can do against a kid who's 19, or on a one-game shot what a hungry group of well-coached guys" can do, said Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski, whose top-seeded team cruised to two victories in the Atlanta Regional.

"In this time of the year, a lot of teams that you face — unless they come from a really tough conference, are not beaten down physically," Krzyzewski said. "They have a good ego, and they're in pretty good physical shape."

In the St. Louis Regional, No. 1 Kentucky and No. 2 Gonzaga already are gone. In the Phoenix Regional, No. 1 Stanford, No. 3 North Carolina State and No. 4 Maryland no longer stand in Connecticut's way.

In the Atlanta Regional, Duke faces No. 5 Illinois, and No. 3 Texas takes on No. 7 Xavier. The only section of the bracket that played to form was the East Rutherford Regional, where No. 1 Saint Joseph's, No. 2 Oklahoma State, No. 3 Pittsburgh and No. 4 Wake Forest all reached the final 16.

"That's what makes this tournament great. You can have a region where 1 through 4's alive, and you can have a region like the one we're in, where the 1 and 2 are out of it," said Kansas' first-year coach, Bill Self. "That's the NCAA tournament."

Texas coach Rick Barnes noted another challenge for favorites at tournament time: keeping a neutral-court crowd, which usually loves an underdog, from becoming a factor.

"The key is to get lost in the game," Barnes said. "You expect, most of the time in this tournament, most crowds are going to cheer for the darker jerseys. That's kind of the way it's always worked."

One person who's all-too-aware that forecasts can be wrong is Georgia Tech coach Paul Hewitt, whose team was picked to finish seventh in the ACC this season.

So his players don't think they have an advantage just because some high-seeded teams are gone.

"The fact that we were so overlooked provided a great lesson to our players," Hewitt said. "We were left for dead. Now we're in the 'Sweet 16.' We know there are some real quality teams out there that aren't being recognized."

Associated Press sports writers Jim Vertuno in Austin, Texas, and Paul Newberry in Atlanta, and Associated Press writer Jay Cohen in Durham, N.C., contributed to this report.

Schwarzenegger set to travel

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will travel to Israel in May to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, the governor's office said.

Schwarzenegger is a longtime supporter of the Wiesenthal center, which is devoted to fighting intolerance and is named for the famed Nazi hunter.

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom met with Schwarzenegger on Friday at the Los Angeles center and discussed the possibility of the governor speaking at an anti-Semitism conference in Israel, said Shalom's spokesman, Moshe Debby.

The trip will be Schwarzenegger's first outside the United States since he became governor last year.

Tom hankered for Coen role

Count Tom Hanks among the fans of the Coen brothers.

"I've always said, 'What are they up

Faces 'n' Places

to?' even though we had never really met. I would tell my agent to let me know if a script of theirs crosses the border," Hanks told the San Francisco Chronicle in Sunday's editions.

Now Hanks has joined with Joel and Ethan Coen — who have made films such as "Fargo" and "The Big Lebowski" — for "The Ladykillers," a loose remake of the 1955 comedy about a hapless gang of would-be robbers. It opens this week.

For this film, Hanks was just one of the main actors, joining Irma P. Hall as a landlady and Marlon Wayans as a gang member.

"Ensemble movies are the most fun for an actor. After 'Cast Away,' I said I never want to be the only guy in a movie again because I thought I was going to go nuts. It's nice to have other actors around to bust up the monotony of just me, me, me all the time."

As for working with the Coens, Hanks said there was little tension.

"It's very calm and there's no panicking that goes on. I must say, sometimes the production office was so quiet when I came in, I wondered, 'Is there a Jewish holiday or something?'"

Relationship afflicts Affleck

When Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez were together romantically, the "Good Will Hunting" star convinced J.Lo. to appear in his film "Jersey Girl," playing the mother of his daughter for 12 movie minutes.

Then came the "Gigli" debacle and the Bennifer breakup.

"I feel vaguely bad because I was someone who said to Jen, 'Oh, come do this small part. It'll be fun,' and we got nothing but trouble for it," Affleck said.

The former couple's relationship complicated many aspects of the picture. Lopez was removed from all publicity and their on-screen wedding scene was cut.

From The Associated Press

Prior starts on DL

The Associated Press

The Chicago Cubs will be without a key member of their powerful rotation when the season begins.

Mark Prior will start the year on the 15-day disabled list because of inflammation in his right Achilles' tendon.

Prior was originally scheduled to start Chicago's third game April 8 at Cincinnati. Now the Cubs hope to have him for their first homestand April 12-19.

Jason Schmidt, Robb Nen and Larry Walker are also struggling to recover from injuries.

Schmidt will miss his second straight spring start Thursday because of a sore shoulder, raising doubt whether he'll be ready for San Francisco's season opener at Houston.

And so is Nen, whose workload was cut back because of discomfort in his right shoulder.

Tests determined that Nen's soreness was unrelated to the operations, Conte said.

Walker's strained left groin has not improved, putting his availability for Opening Day in jeopardy.

Colorado center fielder Preston Wilson, who led the NL with 141 RBIs last season, said his sore left knee is improving and he expects to be in the Opening Day lineup.

In Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Orioles pitcher Omar Daal felt soreness in the back of his left shoulder while throwing on a back field. Tests on Wednesday will determine the extent of the damage.

In Sarasota, Fla., Reds manager Dave Miley picked newcomer Cory Lidle to start the season opener against the Cubs.

In spring training games:

Yankees 3, Reds 2

SARASOTA, Fla. — Jose Contreras showed he's ready for New York's season-opening trip to Japan, pitching five hitless innings before losing his touch. Ken Griffey Jr. hit a two-run single in the sixth, when Contreras walked two and threw two wild pitches. He gave up two hits in 5²/₃ innings, striking out eight.

Mets 9, Expos (ss) 5

VIERA, Fla. — Mike Piazza homered twice and drove in five runs. He's hitting .387 with four homers and 16 RBIs this spring.

Rangers 9, Padres 3

PEORIA, Ariz. — San Diego closer Trevor Hoffman was tagged for two runs and three hits in one inning.

Astros 12, Braves 3

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Roger Clemens struck out six in five scoreless innings.

Marlins 11, Dodgers 1

JUPITER, Fla. — Jeff Weaver allowed seven runs — five earned — and 10 hits in three innings. He's 1-2 with an 8.47 ERA this spring.

Red Sox 7, Devil Rays 4

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Derek Lowe needed only 70 pitches in six shutout innings. In 18¹/₃ innings in four starts this spring, he has allowed two earned runs for a 0.98 ERA and just three walks.

Blue Jays 10, Indians 9

DUNEDIN, Fla. — Frank Catalanotto hit a grand slam off Jason Bere, who further jeopardized his chance to make Cleveland's starting rotation.

Pirates 8, Phillies 2

BRADENTON, Fla. — Billy Wagner struck out one, walked one and allowed a hit in a scoreless inning.

Expos (ss) 3, Orioles 0

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Sun-Woo Kim pitched five innings of two-hit ball and the Expos improved to 14-6 — the best spring training record in the majors.

Angels 7, Brewers 2

TEMPE, Ariz. — Aaron Sele turned in his best outing of the spring, limiting Milwaukee to four hits in five scoreless innings. The right-hander has a 3.21 ERA this spring, best among Anaheim's potential starters.

Athletics 7, Royals 5

PHOENIX — Barry Zito pitched five shutout innings and Eric Chavez hit a three-run homer and had four RBIs.

Cubs 12, Giants 4

MESA, Ariz. — Barry Bonds hit a three-run homer. Carlos Zambrano worked six innings, improving to 3-0 this spring.

White Sox 13, Diamondbacks 5

TUCSON, Ariz. — Scott Schoeneweis pitched five innings for Chicago, allowing four runs and eight hits.

Bucks end Kings' run at home

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Michael Redd scored 26 points and Keith Van Horn had 22 points and 11 rebounds Tuesday night, helping the struggling Milwaukee Bucks defeat the Sacramento Kings 112-101.

The loss snapped Sacramento's 29-game home winning streak against Eastern Conference teams, dating back to a 97-86 loss to Indiana on March 3, 2002.

Milwaukee, which had lost five straight and eight of nine, handed the Kings their 20th loss of the season and knocked them a half-game behind Indiana for the league's best record.

Milwaukee, which shot 51 percent

and outrebounded the Kings 44-36, raced to a 15-3 lead and never trailed. The best Sacramento could do was tie the game at 50-50 before Damon Jones made a three-pointer in the closing seconds to give Milwaukee a 53-50 half-time lead.

Joe Smith had 20 points and nine rebounds for the Bucks, who scored eight straight points to take a 98-88 lead.

Desmond Mason scored 16 points and Jones added 11 points and six assists.

Mike Bibby scored 27 points and Peja Stojakovic scored 21 points for the Kings.

Chris Webber added 17 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, while Brad Miller had 14 points.

Scores/standings

NBA Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
xy-Indiana	51	19	.729	—
y-New Jersey	42	28	.600	9
x-Detroit	46	26	.639	6
New Orleans	37	34	.521	14 ¹ / ₂
Milwaukee	35	35	.500	16
Miami	33	37	.471	18
New York	33	38	.465	18 ¹ / ₂
Cleveland	31	39	.443	20

Boston	31	40	.437	20 ¹ / ₂
Toronto	30	40	.429	21
Philadelphia	29	42	.408	22 ¹ / ₂
Washington	22	48	.314	29
Atlanta	22	49	.310	29 ¹ / ₂
Chicago	20	51	.282	31 ¹ / ₂
Orlando	19	53	.264	33

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
xy-Sacramento	51	20	.718	—
xy-Minnesota	49	22	.690	2
L.A. Lakers	47	23	.671	3 ¹ / ₂
San Antonio	46	25	.648	5
Dallas	44	26	.629	6 ¹ / ₂
Memphis	44	26	.629	6 ¹ / ₂
Houston	40	29	.580	10
Utah	37	34	.521	14

Denver	37	35	.514	14 ¹ / ₂
Portland	35	35	.500	15 ¹ / ₂
Seattle	32	38	.457	18 ¹ / ₂
Golden State	29	40	.420	21
L.A. Clippers	27	44	.380	24
Phoenix	24	47	.338	27

x-clinched playoff spot
y-division leader

Tuesday's games

Phoenix 103, Cleveland 86
Memphis 95, Toronto 86
New Orleans 82, Detroit 81
Minnesota 86, San Antonio 81
New Jersey 84, Chicago 81
Utah 85, Washington 77
Milwaukee 112, Sacramento 101

Wednesday's games

Miami at Orlando
Phoenix at Philadelphia
Memphis at New York
Dallas at Indiana
Toronto at Houston
Minnesota at Denver
Utah at Seattle
L.A. Clippers at Portland
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers
Milwaukee at Golden State

Thursday's games

New Orleans at Atlanta
Detroit at San Antonio
Washington at L.A. Clippers

Friday's games

Indiana at Orlando
Cleveland at Philadelphia
Toronto at New York
Houston at Memphis
New Jersey at Boston
Dallas at Miami
Phoenix at New Orleans
Milwaukee at Chicago
Denver at Seattle
Minnesota at L.A. Lakers
Washington at Golden State

NHL Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Tampa Bay	43	21	8	5	99	230	180
xz-Philadelphia	39	18	14	6	98	220	173
xz-Boston	38	17	14	7	97	195	172
x-Toronto	41	24	9	3	94	225	200
x-Ottawa	39	22	9	6	93	243	172
x-New Jersey	39	23	12	2	92	193	155
Montreal	40	26	7	3	90	198	173
N.Y. Islanders	35	27	10	4	84	215	194

Buffalo	33	32	6	4	76	198	206
Atlanta	30	34	8	4	72	202	228
Florida	27	31	14	4	72	170	199
Carolina	26	31	13	6	71	153	187
N.Y. Rangers	25	37	7	8	65	195	234
Washington	22	43	9	2	55	171	234
Pittsburgh	21	45	7	4	53	178	287

Western Conference

	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Detroit	43	20	11	2	99	238	177
x-San Jose	38	20	12	6	94	203	173
x-Colorado	38	20	13	5	94	224	183
Dallas	39	24	13	0	91	179	158
Vancouver	37	24	10	5	89	214	187
Calgary	38	28	7	3	86	186	167
Nashville	34	28	11	3	82	199	204
Edmonton	33	27	12	4	82	206	194

St. Louis	34	28	11	2	81	174	185
Los Angeles	28	24	16	7	79	196	198
Anaheim	28	31	10	8	74	177	202
Minnesota	25	27	20	3	73	163	167
Phoenix	21	31	18	6	66	183	226
Chicago	20	38	11	6	57	176	229
Columbus	21	42	8	4	54	161	221

Two points for a win, one point for a tie and overtime loss.

x-clinched playoff spot

y-clinched division

z-division leader

Tuesday's games

Boston 4, Ottawa 2
Philadelphia 4, Carolina 2
N.Y. Islanders 3, Washington 0
New Jersey 4, Florida 3, OT
Tampa Bay 7, Toronto 2
Pittsburgh 5, N.Y. Rangers 2
Anaheim 4, Nashville 1
Chicago 2, Colorado 2, tie
San Jose 5, Detroit 2

Wednesday's games

Minnesota at Columbus
Montreal at Buffalo
Washington at Atlanta
Calgary at Phoenix
Dallas at Edmonton
Los Angeles at Vancouver

Thursday's games

Toronto at Boston
Florida at Carolina
New Jersey at Tampa Bay
N.Y. Islanders at Philadelphia
Ottawa at Montreal
Nashville at N.Y. Rangers
Anaheim at St. Louis
Detroit at Colorado
Minnesota at Chicago
Calgary at San Jose

Friday's games

Anaheim at Columbus
New Jersey at Atlanta
Pittsburgh at Buffalo
Los Angeles at Edmonton
San Jose at Phoenix

From The Associated Press